Wyoming Department of Health, Status of Primary Care Provider Workforce

Prepared for Dr. Sherard June 12, 2009 Office of Rural Health

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Executive Summary

Primary Care providers are physicians practicing Family Practice, General Practice, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, or OB/Gyn, and non-physician providers such as Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, and Nurse Midwives.

According to our latest analysis a total of 13 counties are experiencing a shortage of primary care physicians. The Wyoming Health Resources Network reports 33 openings across the state for primary care physicians. With no medical school in Wyoming, formal training for primary care providers is limited to the University of Wyoming's nurse practitioner course and the Cheyenne and Casper family practice residencies. As a result, recruitment efforts specifically target former Wyoming residents attending out-of-state training to become primary care providers. The Wyoming Healthcare Professional Loan Repayment Program (WHPLRP) was showing great promise in accomplishing this prior to the budget crisis that eliminated funding. The WHPLRP also served as a great incentive for nurses to train as nurse practitioners thereby helping to increase access to care in rural areas of the state.

Numerous studies have shown that healthcare professionals who grew up in rural communities and trained in rural communities are substantially more likely to practice in rural areas. Multiagency efforts at all levels must continue encouraging Wyoming students to consider the healthcare professions, especially provider professions such as physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and mid-wives.

Tab 1. Physician Distribution and Shortages

Listed in order of greatest shortage to least shortage.

Estimated No. of Primary Care Physicians Needed using Rural Health Works Formulas

	J	# Primary	
	# Primary Care	Care	
	Physicians	Physicians	
	Needed	In Place	Shortage
Sweetwater	17.23	10.00	-7.23
Carbon	7.12	3.00	-4.12
Washakie	3.80	0.00	-3.80
Big Horn	5.49	2.00	-3.49
Park	13.25	10.00	-3.25
Uinta	8.89	6.00	-2.89
Albany	13.11	11.00	-2.11
Converse	6.10	4.00	-2.10
Lincoln	7.49	6.00	-1.49
Weston	3.38	2.00	-1.38
Crook	3.07	2.00	-1.07
Niobrara	1.22	1.00	-0.22
Platte	4.13	4.00	-0.13
Sublette	3.76	4.00	0.24
Johnson	4.15	5.00	0.85
Natrona	33.11	35.00	1.89
Goshen	5.90	8.00	2.10
Sheridan	13.65	17.00	3.35
Campbell	17.27	22.00	4.73
Teton	8.83	14.00	5.17
Hot Springs	2.47	9.00	6.53
Freemont	17.72	29.00	11.28
Laramie	39.26	56.00	16.74
Total	240.40	260.00	19.60

 Tab 2. Provider Demographics
 (Source: WYSAC database)

Provider Ages (Source: WYSAC database)

County	ND Average Age	DAS AVIONO A A S	Physician Average		
All	NP Average Age	PAs Average Age	Age		
Albany	48.8	55.5	48.7		
Big Horn	63	39.6	76.2		
Campbell	52.4	55.1	48.2		
Carbon	36.3	46.9	56.1		
Converse	n/a	43.3	45.2		
Crook	n/a	48.0	40.5		
Fremont	54.2	54.4	50.3		
Goshen	38.7	n/a	51.9		
Hot Springs	57.2	47.1	44.5		
Johnson	46.3	n/a	50.7		
Laramie	46.1	43.7	49.4		
Lincoln	50.9	52.7	55.8		
Natrona	52.8	47.8	50.6		
Niobrara	n/a	55.5	45.9		
Park	42.4	43.5	51.1		
Platte	44.1	51.4	48.1		
Sheridan	35.9	43.7	52.5		
Sublette	60	55.2	43.3		
Sweetwater	52.1	44.9	50.8		
Teton	56.9	45.7	48.4		
Uinta	48.9	37.6	55.5		
Washakie	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Weston	n/a	55.0	55.6		

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Healthcare providers considering retirement

County	NPs In the next 2 years	NPs In the next 3- 5 years	NPs In the next 6- 10 years	PAs In the next 2 years	PAs In the next 3- 5 years	PAs In the next 6- 10 years	Phys In the next 2 years	Phys In the next 3- 5 years	Phys In the next 6- 10 years
Albany	0	1	3	0	1	1	1	5	5
Big Horn	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Campbell	0	0	0	0	2	1	5	4	9
Carbon	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	1
Converse	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
Crook	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	1	0	1	1
Fremont	0	3	2	1	0	2	3	6	8
Goshen	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3
Hot Springs	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
Johnson	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	1	1
Laramie	1	2	8	0	3	1	7	16	25
Lincoln	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2
Natrona	0	2	7	0	3	6	7	8	15
Niobrara	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	1	0	1	0
Park	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	7	6
Platte	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Sheridan	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	7	9
Sublette	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sweetwater	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	8	5
Teton	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	5	3
Uinta	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Washakie	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0
Weston	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0	0	1
	4	10	35	1	10	17	37	74	103
Overall %	2.82%	7.04	24.65	0.90%	9.01%	15.32%	6.36	12.31	17.7

Tab 3. Non-Physician Provider Distribution

Distribution of NPs and PAs by County

County	NP Total N from Board***	PAs Total N from Board***	
Albany	28	7	
Big Horn	3	5	
Campbell	8	7	
Carbon	4	7	
Converse	5	5	
Crook	1	1	
Fremont	16	11	
Goshen	2	1	
Hot Springs	6	2	
Johnson	2	2	
Laramie	61	27	
Lincoln	10	1	
Natrona	35	34	
Niobrara	1	1	
Park	8	13	
Platte	6	1	
Sheridan	10	12	
Sublette	2	2	
Sweetwater	7	17	
Teton	24	13	
Uinta	8	4	
Washakie	0	0	
Weston	1	2	
Total	248	175	

 Tab 4. Provider Vacancies (Source: Wyoming Health Resources Network)

County	FP	FP w/OB	Pediatrics	Locum	Internal Medicine	PAs or NPs	Total
Albany		, 02			1		1
Big Horn		1			1		2
Campbell			1				1
Carbon	1	3	1	2		3	10
Converse							0
Crook	1						1
Fremont	1		2			1	4
Goshen		1					1
Hot Springs							0
Johnson							0
Laramie		1					1
Lincoln		1					1
Natrona	1	2			1	4	8
Niobrara	1					1	2
Park							0
Platte							0
Sheridan							0
Sublette							0
Sweetwater	2				2		4
Teton							0
Uinta	2				1	1	4
Washakie		1					1
Weston	2						2
Total	11	10	4	2	6	10	43

Tab 5. Challenges.

- No funding to continue data collection, analysis, and reporting of healthcare workforce data
- No funding for Wyoming Healthcare Professional Loan Repayment Program which is important incentive to recruiting and retaining primary care providers
- Rural physicians and other healthcare providers typically work longer hours, are on-call more than their urban counterparts, and have lower incomes
- Rural physicians and other healthcare providers typically have a higher percentage of patients on Medicare/Medicaid and receive lower reimbursement rates
- Wyoming Office of Rural Health currently evaluates designations for Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) and Medically Underserved Areas/Populations (MUA/MUP). This analysis is used to expand the number of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), Community Health Centers (CHC), and Rural Health Clinics RHC).
- The Governor's HPSA designation will result in additional applications for Rural Health Clinic status. Current staffing in the Wyoming Office of Healthcare Licensing and Surveys may be insufficient to meet the increased demand thus delaying the RHC approval process.
- Uncertain impact of economic situation (e.g. increased unemployment, increased Medicaid enrollment, less reimbursement for providers, etc.) on recruitment and retention of primary care providers.

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